

**ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND ITS
CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE**
A Discourse on Selected Issues

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Islamic Thought and its Contemporary Relevance

[A Discourse on Selected Issues]

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FOUR

Mawdūdī's Approaches to Qur'ānic Exegesis

Md. Yousuf Ali

It is well established that early Muslim Qur'ānic exegetes developed methodologies dealing with principles, approaches, conditions, ways and perspectives of interpretation. They have ever since been concerned with presenting the Qur'ān as a book of guidance for humanity that is relevant to man's life within the parameters of the teachings of Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh). There were two well-known methodologies used by early Muslim scholars, *al-tafsīr bi-al-m'athūr*, and *al-tafsīr bi-al-ra'y* of which the first was considered authentic and used by most while the second was used with some prerequisites and conditions. In addition, among the categories of exegetic classifications, classifications ranged from praiseworthy to those regarded as blameworthy.¹ Qur'ānic exegesis continued also into the twentieth century by several Muslim exegetes, one of whom was Sayyid Abul A'lā Mawdūdī (1321-1399/1903-1979).

Highly influential and prolific, Mawdūdī's *tafḥīm al-Qur'ān* uses both methodologies (*al-tafsīr bi al-ma'ṭhūr* and *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y*) which greatly contribute to the articulation of Islamic revivalist thought and also influenced Muslim activists the world over. *Tafḥīm al-Qur'ān* is an exceptional *tafsīr* considered also an encyclopedia of ideas and thoughts that presents the fundamental teachings of Islam. Its uniqueness is that it is an explanatory or interpretative exposition and not a literal translation of the Arabic.² As such it retains continuity and conformity that preserves the theme of the verses and induces a reading towards Qur'ānic coherence, fluency and

¹ Thameem Ushama, "Sayyid Quṭb's Methodology of Qur'ānic Exegesis" (Kuala Lumpur: *Al-Shajarah*, Journal of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, IIUM, vol. 13, no.1, 2008), p. 23.

² Mustansir Mir, "Some Features of Mawdūdī's *Tafḥīm al-Qur'ān*" (*American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1985), pp. 233-244.